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ABSTRACT

The results of a survey of nonparticipating schools are contained in this, the second of two reports evaluating the Georgia Right to Read Project. The survey solicited information about why the schools had elected not to participate, and it is concluded that lack of time and of money were the major reasons for nonparticipation. (A copy of the survey form is appended.) (FL)

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Georgia Right to Read Program

External Evaluation Report:

Part II: Non-Participants

Center for Educational Research
Georgia State University
October, 1978

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CS004544

INTRODUCTION

The following report is a part of the effort to evaluate the Georgia Right to Read project. An initial report concerning schools involved in the Georgia Right to Read program has already been submitted. That report contained information regarding attitudes and program quality gained as a result of surveying those principals, lead reading teachers and county Right to Read directors in individual schools and systems participating in the Georgia Right to Read program during the 1977-1978 school year.

The report presented here is a continuation of that same evaluation process of the Georgia Right to Read program.

PROCEDURES

All Georgia school systems not participating in the Right to Read program during the 1977-1978 school year were surveyed. Of 188 school systems in the state, 120 systems did not elect to participate in the Right to Read program during the 1977-1978 school year. Each of these systems was contacted via the curriculum director, or when unavailable, the system superintendent was asked to respond. The respondents were asked to complete a survey form including job description, degree of familiarity with the Georgia Right to Read program, and status with regard to the program, system size, and fluctuation of test scores for the past three years. In addition, several possible reasons for non-participation were identified. Each of six headings had from three to six specific reasons for a system's non-participation. This was an attempt to elicit more complete information about why a school system would elect to not participate in the Georgia Right to Read program. Summary headings were: (1) financial rewards or recognition for participation; (2) availability of qualified or interested personnel; (3) program quality; (4) degree and quality of information provided about the program; (5) program relevance; and (6) amount of time required for program involvement. (A complete listing may be found in the Appendix.)

Summary statistics were computed using SPSS subprogram FREQUENCIES.

Results

All schools not participating in the Georgia Right to Read program during the 1977-1978 school year were contacted. A total of 120 survey forms were mailed. 94, or 76% were returned. 70% were completed by the Curriculum director; 7% by by the reading/language arts specialists, and 17% fell into the category labeled "other." Most of this 17% represents local system superintendents.

Of interest was the degree of familiarity with the Georgia Right to Read program. 30% were aware of the program's existence; 20% had talked to a State

Department Consultant about the program; 18% had attended some information session about the program; 15% had seen and read the Criteria of Excellence, while 4% were only aware of the document's existence. 11% had at one time worked with the Georgia Right to Read program; and only 1% reported that they were unaware of the program.

Respondents were asked to assess the status of their local system with regard to the Georgia Right to Read program. 33% had actively chosen not to participate; 43% reported that no firm decision had been made yet; 8% intended to participate but at a later date; and 11% had participated in the program in the past but were currently inactive. The remaining 5% did not respond.

Information regarding test score performance was requested. Only 2% responded that test scores had declined over the last three years; 42% reported scores had remained about the same; and 53% said scores had increased.

Results for each of the six categories or reasons for non-participation are reported in the tables below. When no responses was given, it was assumed that the category did not contain any reasons relevant to that system's non-participation. It was also possible for a respondent to check more than one reason for any specific category. The print out (attached) reflects the combination of choices, but the tables below reflect the percentages for each choice individually.

REASON 1:

1. Reward/Recognition

Subcategories for Reason 1	Per Cent
1) No response (not selected as a reason)	30%

2) Locally we do not have money for personnel to administer the program	51%
3) There is no "extra" money available from State or Federal sources to develop and maintain the program	27%
4) There are no financial rewards for our participation in the program	1%
5) We feel we would get nothing in return for the extra time and money we might spend to implement the program	10%

REASON II: Personnel

Subcategories for Reason II	Per Cent
1) No response (not selected as a reason)	65%
2) Locally we do not have qualified personnel to act as the Right to Read director	11%
3) Locally we do not have qualified personnel to act as Lead Reading Teachers	12%
4) Locally we do not have anyone interested in directing the Right to Read Program (as Lead Reading Teachers or the County Director)	17%

REASON III: Program Quality

Subcategories for Reason III	Per Cent
1) No response (not selected as a reason)	65%
2) We feel the Georgia Right to Read Program is generally of poor quality	1%
3) We feel there are too many unnecessary components to the program	10%
4) We feel the program is short-lived, that it is just another State project soon to be forgotten	5%

5) We feel the program requirements are unrealistic	9%
6) We feel the standards of the Criteria of Excellence are virtually unattainable	3%
7) We feel the quality of our own reading program is better than that of the state Right to Read program	17%

REASON IV: Program Information

Subcategories for Reason IV	Per Cent
1) No response (not selected as a reason)	64%
2) We have never been approached about participating in the program	7%
3) We have heard about the program, but it has never been explained clearly or fully to us	22%
4) We have requested information about the program and the request has not been fulfilled	6%
5) We feel there are too many unanswered questions about the purposes of the program	7%
6) We have heard about the program from other systems, and as a result of their experience/information, we are not interested ourselves	1%

REASON V: Program Relevance

Subcategories for Reason V	Per Cent
1) No response (not selected as a reason)	31%
2) We feel the program is too involved for our current reading needs	7%
3) Locally we feel the program really won't make any difference in the reading achievement of our students	2%

4) We feel we can do a better job without the State program	3%
5) We feel that participation in the program would be a duplication of our own local program	24%
6) We feel the lack of a full commitment by the State to support the Georgia Right to Read program; since the State has not made it a priority item yet, we haven't either	23%

REASON VI: Time Involvement

Subcategories for Reason VI	Per Cent
1) No response (not selected as a reason)	49%
2) We feel we can spend our time more productively on our own without implementing the program	27%
3) We feel that involvement in the Georgia Right to Read program would increase the amount of time spent on such things as paper work	28%
4) We feel we do not have time for the in-service/meetings locally and with State Department personnel which are a part of the Georgia Right to Read program	24%

CONCLUSIONS

School systems in the state which were not participating in the Georgia Right to Read program outnumbered the systems which did participate during the 1977-1978 school year. Of the state's 188 school systems, 120 did not participate, while 68 did. An understanding of why systems did not choose to participate could possibly provide a rationale for program extension, and/or revision.

Of the six possible reasons identified in the survey, 65% of the respondents said that program quality was not a reason for their system's non-participation. For this same general reason, only 17% said they felt their local program was better than the State Right to Read program. Each of the other five reasons related to program quality were selected by 10% or less of the respondents as causes for non-participation. This seems to be a strong statement in support of the current program guidelines and goals. Strengthening this statement is the fact that almost 70% of the respondents reported what can be called a working knowledge of the program. Program quality then, seems to be not an issue; the Georgia Right to Read program does project a positive image and presents a high quality reading program.

Personnel to direct the program, i.e. lead reading teachers and system directors, also proved to be unimportant as a reason for non-participation for 65% of the respondents. However, of those selecting this reason, 17% had no one interested, and 11% and 12% had no one qualified for Right to Read director or lead reading teacher, respectively.

These figures imply that basically any system that is interested in the program can identify qualified personnel. The 17% who had no one interested in leadership roles may be reflective of local apathy toward the program rather than a true lack of interest on the part of qualified personnel.

Information about the Georgia Right to Read program was not a major reason for non-participation. 64% responded that they in fact knew about the program and that lack of awareness was not a contributing factor to their non-participation. One specific reason does stand out, however, 22% responded that though they were aware of the program, they felt it had never been fully explained to them. This may be due to the actual amount and clarity of information from the state

department; or perhaps more realistically may reflect the turn-over in local system personnel. It is not incumbant upon this study to identify how and what kind of information about the Right to Read program is disseminated, but it seems to be a problem for some school systems as they choose non-participation in the Right to Read program.

A majority of the respondents (51%) reported that program relevance was not a valid reason for their non-participation. Within this category, 24% felt the Georgia Right to Read program was a duplication of their own local program. One could question the issue of duplication if in fact the Georgia Right to Read program was being duplicated at the system level, it seems those systems could easily elect to participate in the state program, become validated, and exhibit a model program. These systems however, are choosing not to participate.

One possible explanation can be identified in that 23% of the respondents reportedly were not participating in the Georgia Right to Read program because they felt the state was not committed to fully supporting their own reading program. These relatively high percentages, 24% and 23% should speak clearly to those at the state level who are responsible for identifying and supporting the state's reading program. If any purpose is to be served across the state in improving reading instruction, the state department must present a unified image of what is desirable and good for the children of the state. There apparently exists some confusion about this. If the Right to Read program is in fact the state's reading program, the existing confusion can and should be cleared up immediately.

The amount of time involved in program participation was selected by 51% of the respondents as a factor contributing to their system's decision of

non-participation. 28% felt there would be increased paperwork; 27% felt the time could be spent more productively within their own system; and 24% felt they had no "extra" time for program implementation, which would include in-service sessions and state level workshop sessions. Time is always an issue it seems, but it also seems apparent that this group of respondents does not view the state program and personnel as playing a supportive role, but rather demanding additional time for another program. Every school system has a local reading program; special care should be given to communicating the fact that the Georgia Right to Read program is not in addition to that program, but supportive and an extension of that same program. If this one point was clarified, time involvement to implement the program would perhaps not be the issue it currently appears to be.

The final reason, lack of rewards and/or recognition was selected by 70% of the respondents as a reason for their system's non-participation. 51% claimed they had no funds available for personnel to administer the program. Extra personnel are not directly required by the program. Someone is to be designated as the system Right to Read director and each school is asked to identify a lead reading teacher. The director's role could be filled by the curriculum director, reading coordinator, or similar existing personnel. In some cases, the lead reading teacher can be the principal. Ideally, specially qualified and interested personnel should hold these jobs, but the Right to Read program can be implemented without additional personnel.

27% of the respondents identified lack of "extra" money from the state to develop and maintain the program. This again may reflect some confusion as to the role of the Georgia Right to Read program. If it is considered an extra program, the reason suggested may be valid. However, if the Right to Read

program and the state reading program are one in the same, the complaint of no extra money becomes irrelevant.

In summary, the survey of Georgia school systems conducted for the purpose of evaluating the Georgia Right to Read program has shown a strong agreement of the program's quality. Those respondents from participating school systems supported the Georgia Right to Read program by demonstrating their agreement with 25 items related to the Criteria of Excellence as reported in a prior report. Those systems not participating showed support of program quality by stating that they know about the program, and program quality was not the major reason for their non-participation.

Lack of time and money emerged as the main reasons for electing to not participate in the Georgia Right to Read program. Implementation of the Georgia Right to Read program, which apparently has merit in the eyes of the state's educational leaders, can be fostered by strong commitment on the part of the state department to support this program. If in fact the Right to Read program is the state reading program, whatever amounts of time and money which may be required should be made available.

If the best interests of students are to be served across the state, commitment becomes the first key issue. Without this, the degree of program quality, regardless of how high, is not sufficient to carry the standards of the Georgia Right to Read program to the level of implementation and success that the children of Georgia deserve.

4 Size of system (Number of children in average daily attendance (ADA)

- ☐1 999 or under
- ☐2 1,000 - 1,999
- ☐3 2,000 - 2,999
- ☐4 3,000 - 3,999
- ☐5 4,000 - 4,999
- ☐6 5,000 - 5,999
- ☐7 6,000 - 6,999
- ☐8 7,000 - 7,999
- ☐9 8,000 - 8,999
- ☐10 9,000 - 9,999
- ☐11 10,000 and over

5 Over the last three-year period, our reading scores on state-wide and /or local testing have tended to:

- ☐1 decline
- ☐2 stay about the same
- ☐3 increase

The following six categories are intended to explore the reason(s) why your local school system is not currently participating in the Georgia Right to Read Program. They are: (I) Rewards/Recognition; (II) Personnel; (III) Program Quality; (IV) Program Information; (V) Program Relevance; (VI) Time Involvement.

Please return the survey form by April 21 to:

Dr. John H. Neel
Center for Educational Research
Urban Life Building
College of Education
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303

NON-PARTICIPATION

1 Job description

- ☐ 1 Curriculum generalist (all areas)
- ☐ 2 Reading/Language Arts specialist
- ☐ 3 Other, please specify _____

2 Familiarity with the Georgia Right to Read Program:

- ☐ 1 I am aware of the Georgia Right to Read Program, but have not pursued any specific information regarding it.
- ☐ 2 I have spoken with the State Department consultants about the Georgia Right to Read Program.
- ☐ 3 I have attended an information session about the Georgia Right to Read Program.
- ☐ 4 I have seen and read the Georgia Right to Read Program guidelines (Criteria of Excellence).
- ☐ 5 I am aware that there are guidelines for the Georgia Right to Read Program.
- ☐ 6 I have worked with the Georgia Right to Read Program in the past.
- ☐ 7 I am not aware of the Georgia Right to Read Program.

3 Local status with regard to the Georgia Right to Read Program:

- ☐ 1 The School System has actively chosen not to become involved in theGeorgia Right to Read Program.
- ☐ 2 The School System has not made a decision about the Georgia Right to Read Program participation as yet.
- ☐ 3 The School System intends to participate in the Georgia Right to Read Program but at a later date.
- ☐ 4 The School System has participated in the past, but is currently inactive.

(I) Rewards/Recognition

We are not participating in the Georgia Right to Read Program because there are no financial rewards or other forms of recognition.*

- ☐1 Locally we do not have money for personnel to administer the program.
- ☐2 There is no "extra" money available from State or Federal sources to develop and maintain the program.
- ☐3 There are no financial rewards for our participation in the program.
- ☐4 We feel we would get nothing in return for the extra time and money we might spend to implement the program.

Comments:

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*Please check only those statements that are reasons for your system's non-participation in the Georgia Right to Read Program.

II Personnel

We are not participating in the Georgia Right to Read Program because of personnel.*

☐$_1$ Locally we do not have qualified personnel to act as the Right to Read director.

☐$_2$ Locally we do not have qualified personnel to act as Lead Reading Teachers.

☐$_3$ Locally we do not have anyone interested in directing the Right to Read Program (as Lead Reading Teachers or the County Director).

Comments:

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*Please check only those statements that are reasons for your system's non-participation in the Georgia Right to Read Program.

III Program Quality

We are not participating in the Georgia Right to Read Program because of the quality of the program.*

- ☐1 We feel the Georgia Right to Read Program is generally of poor quality.
- ☐2 We feel there are too many unnecessary components to the program.
- ☐3 We feel the program is short-lived; that it is just another State project soon to be forgotten.
- ☐4 We feel the program requirements are unrealistic.
- ☐5 We feel the standards of the Criteria of Excellence are virtually unattainable.
- ☐6 We feel the quality of our own reading program is better than that of the State Right to Read Program.

Comments:

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*Please check only those statements that are reasons for your system's non-participation in the Georgia Right to Read Program.

IV Program Information

We are not participating in the Georgia Right to Read Program because we are uninformed about it.*

- ☐1 We have never been approached about participating in the program.
- ☐2 We have heard about the program, but it has never been explained clearly or fully to us.
- ☐3 We have requested information about the program and the request had not been fulfilled.
- ☐4 We feel there are too many unanswered questions about the purposes of the program.
- ☐5 We have heard about the program from other systems, and as a result of their experience/information, we are not interested ourselves.

Comments:

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*Please check only those statements that are reasons for your system's non-participation in the Georgia Right to Read Program.

(V)

Program Relevance

We are not participating in the Georgia Right to Read Program because it is not relevant to our system and students.*

- ☐1 We feel the program is too involved for our current reading needs.
- ☐2 Locally we feel the program really won't make any difference in the reading achievement of our students.
- ☐3 We feel we can do a better job without the State Program.
- ☐4 We feel that participation in the program would be a duplication of our own local program.
- ☐5 We feel the lack of a full committment by the State to support the Georgia Right to Read Program; since the State has not made it a priority item yet, we haven't either.

Comments:

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*Please check only those statements that are reasons for your system's non-participation in the Georgia Right to Read Program.

VI Time Involvement

We are not participating in the Georgia Right to Read Program because the amount of time spent to implement the program is not realistic.*

☐1 We feel we can spend our time more productively on our own without implementing the program.

☐2 We feel that involvement in the Georgia Right to Read Program would increase the amount of time spent on such things as paper work.

☐3 We feel we do not have time for the in-services/meetings locally and with State Department personnel which are a part of the Georgia Right to Read Program.

Comments:

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*Please check only those statements that are reasons for your system's non-participation in the Georgia Right to Read Program.